

Remarks

Reconsideration and reversal of the rejections expressed in the Office Action of August 27, 2004 are respectfully contended in view of the following remarks and the application as amended. The present invention relates to a method for reducing the amount of particles and residues in photomasks.

Claims 1 - 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. The claims have been clarified to overcome this rejection.

Claims 1 - 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Kern or Hanson et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,472,516, or "the '516 patent"). Note that Applicants' invention as presently claimed defines a method for reducing the amount of particles and residues in photomasks by inter alia, providing a photomask having patterned metal layers; treating the photomask with a cleaning process; removing particles greater than about 0.2 microns while removing a minimal amount of patterned metal layers; and exercising the cleaning process on a particular photomask for a multiple number of cleaning cycles without degradation of the photomask.

Kern, in contrast, discloses cleaning of silicon wafers which are not photomasks, while the '516 patent discloses a method for cleaning wafers which are not photomasks. Neither of these cited references are relevant to cleaning of photomasks as disclosed and claimed in the present invention. Therefore, prima facie obviousness is not established.

Claims 14 - 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Kern in view of Hanson et al., in combination with Lee et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,139,993, or "the '993 patent"). Applicants respectfully contend that there is no teaching, suggestion or incentive supporting the combination of Kern or Hanson et al. with the '993 patent. As noted above, neither Kern nor Hanson et al. are relevant to the cleaning of photomasks, as disclosed and claimed in the present invention. Therefore, this rejection is overcome as well.

For all of the above reasons, it is respectfully contended that the solicited claims define patentable subject matter. Reconsideration and reversal of the rejections expressed in the Office Action of August 27, 2004 are respectfully submitted. The Examiner is invited to call the undersigned if any questions arise during the course of reconsideration of this matter.

Respectfully submitted,

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